

Effects of Impression Management on Interview Performance:
An Analysis of Behavioural Description Interview and Situational Interview

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This study investigated the dynamics and effects of various types of verbal and non-verbal impression management (IM) tactics on two formats of structured interview and the respective interview ratings, i.e. behavioural description interview and situational interview. It also examined the correlations between individual difference variables (individualistic- collectivistic personality and horizontal-vertical personality) and IM tactics, and the moderating effects of individual difference variables on the relation between IM tactics and interview ratings. One hundred and fifty nine structured interviews were conducted and video-taped. Participants were evaluated according to a competency model and behaviorally anchored rating scale by professional interviewers. Their IM tactics demonstrated were frequency-coded and analyzed. Individual differences variables were measured by questionnaire and analyzed. Results suggest that various types of IM tactics were adopted differently in different formats of structured interview, and they had different levels of influence on interview ratings. Different individual difference variables correlated

with various IM tactics to different extents. However, the moderating effects of the proposed individual difference variables were not significant. Measures to minimize and optimize the effect of IM are discussed. Suggestions are made on adopting multiple assessment and evaluation procedures in order to raise the utility of job interview. It is suggested that IM during job interview should not be totally avoided as IM carries important job-relevant competencies. This study is the first among Chinese research studies using a behavioral approach on structured interviews, and it contributes to human resources practitioners and organizations in their design and review of effective selection and assessment policies.

摘要

本研究探討各種言語和非言語印象管理技巧於兩種結構性面試及其評分(行為描述面試及情境面試)的情況及影響，個人特質(個人主義和集體主義性格及橫向和縱向性格)與印象管理技巧的關係，及個人特質對印象管理及面試評核的調節變量影響。本研究進行並錄影了一百五十九個結構性面試，於面試中，專業面試員以工作力量表及行為指標評核表對面試者進行評核，面試者所表現的印象管理技巧頻率亦被記錄及分析，個人特質變項則以問卷量度並進行分析。結果顯示面試者於不同的結構性面試模式中運用不同的印象管理技巧，不同的印象管理技巧於不同的結構性面試評核中有不同程度的影響力，及個人特質與運用不同印象管理技巧於不同情況下的關係；而個人特質的調節變量影響則沒有顯著效果。本研究探討減少及優化印象管理的影響的方法，建議運用多重評核程序以提高面試的效益，而非於面試中全面避免印象管理，因其能顯示一些重要的工作能力。本研究是首個以行為模式方法探討結構性面試的針對中國人的研究調查，其對人力資源從業者及機構於設計及檢討有效的招聘及評核方法有重大貢獻。

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Despite the booming economy and prosperous job market in Hong Kong society, job seekers at large still encounter huge challenges in finding a job that can fully utilize their knowledge and match their strength. On the other hand, employers find it hard to recruit suitable employees who are competent and can fit the immediate needs as well as long term growth of the organization. They consider making accurate hiring decisions very difficult. Job applicants may have performed well in the selection process, but turn out less effective in performance when they are placed in the real working environment. Why is it so difficult for employers to identify and hire the most suitable employees even if they have employed sophisticated selection and assessment procedures? What are the factors affecting the effectiveness and validity of common selection processes?

Against the background of the highly competitive job market, job seekers need to try very hard to get the best job. They try to practice and get well-prepared for every step in the selection procedure. Among other things, impressive performance in job interview is crucial for securing a job offer. Every applicants try to present their best selves and to concentrate their preparation on actions that can improve their chance of success in job interviews, in order to be promoted to the next step in the selection process (Peeters & Lievens, 2006), or to be granted a job offer right

away (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Among the many popular approaches, applicants often use impression management (IM) tactics in job interviews in order to create favorable impression for themselves (Hogan, Barrett, & Hogan, 2007; McFarland, Ryan, & Kriska, 2002; Macfarland, Ryan, & Kriska, 2003; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Varma, Toh, & Pichler, 2006) and elicit positive interviewer evaluations (Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Whereas various research studies reported that IM tactics can elicit positive interviewer evaluations and interview outcomes (Ellis, West, Ryan, & DeShon, 2002; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995), this impose questions whether IM can affect the validity of job interviews, and in what way IM can influence hiring decisions of the organizations as well.

In addition, individual differences influence IM behaviors and the effects of IM tactics on interview outcome (Hogan et al., 2007; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Van Iddekinge, McFarland, & Raymark, 2007). Personality of interviewees affects the use of particular IM behaviors, which in turn affects interview performance (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Cultural research studies generally supported that people brought up in different cultural background (individualistic versus collectivistic culture and horizontal verses vertical culture) (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Triandis, 2001; Xie, Chen, & Roy, 2006) and social or family systems (individualist or collective system) (Dwairy, 2002) differ in their attributes and

personalities. In this sense, personalities in terms of cultural attributes seem to have an effect on individuals' IM behavior and may moderate the effect of individuals' IM tactics on the ratings in job interviews. These impose questions whether various individual difference variables, including individualistic-collectivistic personality and horizontal-vertical personality, correlate with the use of IM tactics, and moderate the effects of IM tactics on interview outcome.

Structured Interview

Applicants behave differently in different types of selection procedures and interviews (Ellis et al., 2002; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). This includes structured interview which is gaining increasing attention and being more widely-used in personnel selection. Structured interview overcomes some of the shortcomings of traditional unstructured interview, such as lack of uniform and comprehensive definitions of the competency and characteristic requirements of the position, and lack of a uniform interview procedure (Ellis et al., 2002; Morin & Denis, 2010). Structured interviews often contain a number of components within the evaluation process that can potentially reduce biasing effects. These components include the use of multiple behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS), multiple interviewers, interviewer training, and statistical predictions (Ellis et al., 2002). Structured interview increases the effectiveness of the recruitment process and is widely

supported by previous research studies (Janz, 1982; Latham, Saari, Pursell, & Campion, 1980; Morin & Denis, 2010; Stevens and Kristof, 1995; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007).

Large amount of previous research studies supported the usefulness and relevance of structured interview. It was found that structured interview can bring about positive effects such as improved hiring decisions and promoted superior performance among employees (Morin & Denis, 2010). Furthermore, structured interview is able to contribute to the prediction of teamwork, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior (Morin & Denis, 2010). Structured interview can also achieve impressive reliability and validity (Janz, 1982; Latham et al., 1980; Stevens and Kristof, 1995) in which its validity matches with that of cognitive ability tests (Morin & Denis, 2010). Its predictive validity is very strong for a wide range of jobs in different industries and different occupational levels, including professional and management positions (Morin & Denis, 2010).

The development of structured interview is based on detailed job analysis and the KSAOs (i.e., knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal qualities) required for the position (Morin & Denis, 2010). In this way, interviewer can be more focused on the relevant and job-related information about the applicants. In addition, the standardized questions and procedures (such as question standardization and

response scoring standardization) also help to minimize biases among interviewers and therefore provide a ground for fair comparison between different applicants (Janz, 1982). Moreover, these structured interview practices also facilitate interviewers to focus the conversation on job-related aspects while at the same time reduce or minimize the influence of extraneous information (such as irrelevant non-verbal behavior) on interviewer decisions (Lievens & Peeters, 2008).

Even though structured interview is able to reduce the influence of some extraneous information such as applicants' personality, nonverbal behavior, contamination from prejudices and personal stereotypes of interviewer, the halo effect and the tendency to give more weight to unfavorable information (Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Morin & Denis, 2010; Van Iddekinge et al, 2007), some other factors may still inevitably affect structured interview's validity and effectiveness (Ellis et al., 2002; McFarland et al, 2003; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). These factors may include impression management (IM) tactics.

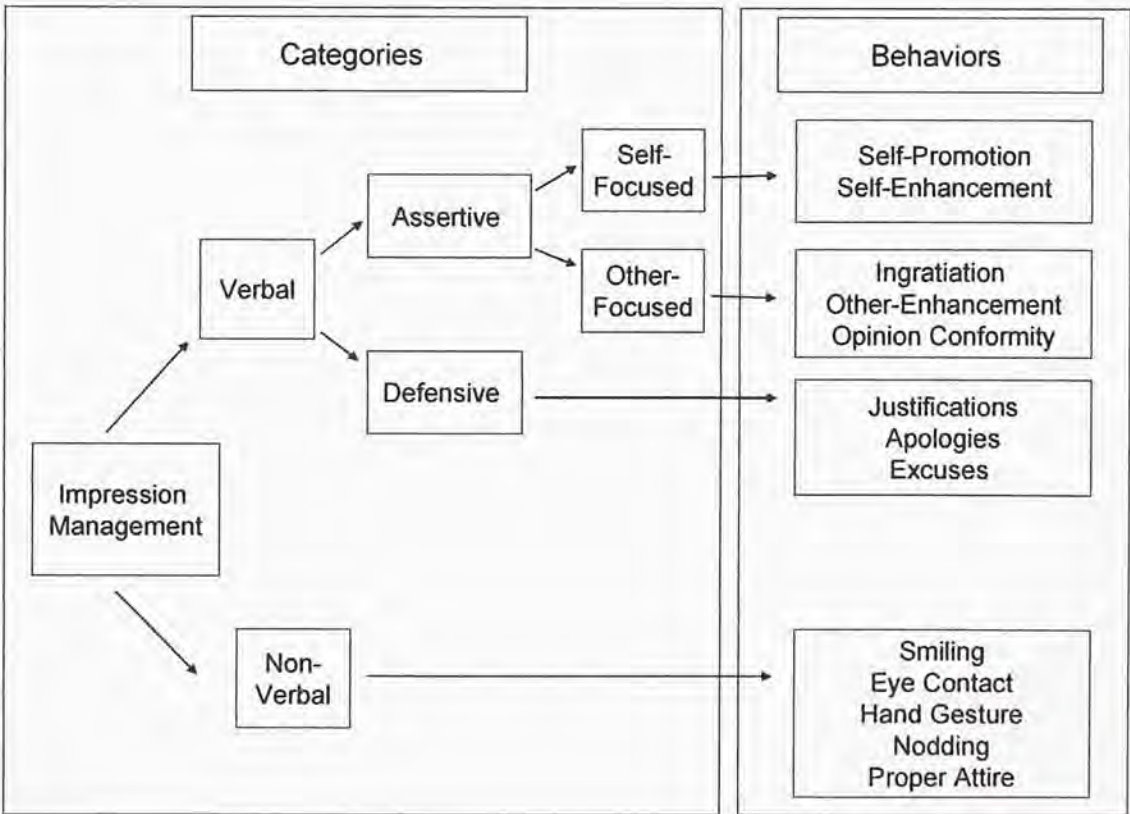
Impression Management

Research studies found that individuals often use impression management (IM) tactics, such as ingratiation and self-promotion, in an attempt to improve the target's perceptions and the evaluations of themselves (Hogan et al., 2007; McFarland et al., 2002; Varma et al., 2006). Individuals wish to be liked by the target because liking

will be instrumental in achieving other more valued goals. In job interviews, being liked can help applicants to appear more competent and to be deemed as more qualified or employable (Varma et al., 2006). Many selection procedures, such as face-to-face interviews, do allow applicants to display the use of certain kind of influence tactics (McFarland et al., 2002; McFarland et al, 2003; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995).

This study attempts to assess the effect of impression management and Figure 1 shows the categorization of IM tactics and their corresponding behavioral indicators adopted. These are based on the categorization developed in previous research studies (Ellis et al., 2002; Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Van Iddekinge, 2007).

Figure 1. *Impression Management Categories and Behavior Indicators*



By definition, IM involves changing the manner in which one typically behaves during interpersonal interaction and is trying to distort the way one normally communicates about himself (Hogan et al., 2007). It is individuals' conscious or unconscious attempt to control the images they project in social interactions (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). IM theory suggests that during social interactions most people try to maximize the acceptance and minimize the rejection (Hogan, 2006). They try to create a particular (usually positive) impression of themselves (Hogan et al., 2007). In addition, IM can take place in many forms (Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007) which include verbal statements (such as ingratiation, opinion conformity, self-enhancement and self-promotion) and nonverbal behaviors (such as smiling, eye contact, hand gestures, nodding affirmatively and modifications to their appearance such as proper dress code) (Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Van Iddekinge, 2007; Varma et al., 2006). Verbal IM tactics are further divided into two categories, namely assertive verbal IM tactics and defensive verbal IM tactics. Assertive verbal IM tactics are used to actively construct a favorable image and they consist of both self-focused and other-focused IM tactics. Self-focused IM tactics are used to show that one possesses desirable competences, relevant skills and other positive qualities for the job. They are indicated by self-enhancement and self-promotion tactics. Other-focused IM tactics are used to

evoke interpersonal attraction or liking. They are used to make others feel good or to show that they hold similar beliefs, feelings and values. They are indicated by ingratiation, other-enhancement and opinion conformity. Furthermore, defensive verbal IM tactics are used to protect or repair one's image. They are often used in response to a perceived, potential or an actual threat to individuals' self-image. They are shown by the use of justifications, apologies and excuses. On the other hand, non-verbal IM tactics are any non-verbal behavior that aims at evoking positive image. Some indicators include smiling, eye contact, hand gesture, nodding and proper attire (Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007; Varma et al., 2006).

Impression Management and Structured Interview

Research studies suggested that IM tactics adopted in different types of interview vary due to the different focus in various interview formats (Ellis et al., 2002; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Different interview formats may facilitate or inhibit the use of various IM tactics differently. For structural interview, it is found to be a valid measure in predicting job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Structural interview can broadly be categorized into behavioural description interview (BDI) and situational interview (SI) (Ellis et al., 2002; Janz, 1982; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). However, previous research studies

mainly focused on the IM differences between structured and unstructured interviews (Stevens & Kristof, 1995) rather than the two types of structured interview.

Indeed, BDI employs past-oriented questions to deal with previous life or work experiences (Janz, 1982). Job applicants are asked about their past behavior in situations similar to those required by the job position concerned, or related to the KSAOs required of successful employees (Ellis et al., 2002). Adopting such questions is based on the premise that past behavior predicts future behavior (Van Iddekinge et al, 2007). On the other hand, SI makes use of questions that are future-oriented. Applicants are placed in a hypothetical imaginary job-relevant situation and are asked about how they will respond to certain situational scenarios (Ellis et al., 2002; Latham et al., 1980). Adopting such questions is based on the premise that intentions predict future behavior (Van Iddekinge et al, 2007).

In this study, the dynamics of IM tactics used in the two types of structured interview is investigated. Their importance and effect on interview outcome, and their relationships with individual difference variables are also studied.

Research studies found that individuals incline to tailor their self-presentations according to the circumstances they are situated in (Ellis et al., 2002). People tend to deploy different IM tactics in response to different situations. During job interviews,

applicants deliberately search for environmental cues that can help them to give the interviewer the most appropriate impression. Conversely, the types of interview formats used and questions asked (either BDI questions or SI questions) during the interview can influence the choice of IM tactics (Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Lopes & Fletcher, 2004; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007).

BDI questions focus on real episodes of past behavior instead of interviewees' answers to hypothetical situations. Some researchers suggested that it may be more difficult for job applicants to present themselves more positively in these past situations which really happened, than in those hypothetical and imaginary ones (Lievens & Peeters, 2008). However, other researchers suggested that BDI questions are more likely and more effective than SI questions to cue self-promoting IM behaviors (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). It is because BDI questions explicitly ask interviewees about their actual roles in past situations. These allow them an opportunity to boast about their past competence and past accomplishments, and thus a chance to promote themselves (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007).

On the other hand, researchers suggested that applicants perform more other-focused IM tactics in SI than BDI. Ellis et al. (2002) reported that while there is less opportunity for the applicants to boast about his or her competence in answering SI questions, there are opportunities for them to conform to the values of,

and favorably evaluate, the organization and its employees.

Furthermore, researchers also suggested that compared with SI questions individuals have greater opportunity to use defensive IM behaviors when responding to BDI questions. As BDI questions focus on previous experiences that have actually happened, it is expected that applicants may become more defensive in trying to explain their behaviors. Lievens and Peeters (2008) suggested that defensive verbal IM tactics that are typically used to protect or repair one's image are used more frequently in BDI than SI. Conversely, it is unlikely that applicants will need to be defensive about their expected behavior in hypothetical situations (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). There is no need to repair one's image or defend one's behavioral choices in hypothetical situations under SI questions.

Most of the previous research studies did not focus on non-verbal IM behavior (Ellis et al. 2002; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). They inclined to investigate verbal IM tactics. This may be due to the methodological constraint of using audio-taped interviews, in which non-verbal behaviors can not be captured. In the present study, interviews were video-taped to facilitate non-verbal IM tactics to be evaluated. From previous study, Streeck (1993) suggested that the expression of body gesture is related to self-awareness, in which when individuals are in higher level of self awareness, they will show more body gesture, vice versa. For the level of self

awareness during job interview, it is expected that job applicants will have higher level of self awareness when they were talking about their own experience in BDI, rather than responding to hypothetical situations in SI. In this sense, it is suggested that job applicants will use more body gesture and non-verbal IM tactics in BDI than SI.

Taken together, the first set of hypotheses for this study is that different interview formats will result in the use of different IM tactics. This leads to the following specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Applicants will use more self-focused IM tactics in BDI than in SI.

Hypothesis 1b: Applicants will use more other-focused IM tactics in SI than in BDI.

Hypothesis 1c: Applicants will use more defensive IM tactics in BDI than in SI.

Hypothesis 1d: Applicants will use more non-verbal IM tactics in BDI than in SI.

Structured interviewing practices have been advocated to reduce interviewers' sensitivity to job applicants' IM tactics (Janz, 1982; Latham et al, 1980; Stevens and Kristof, 1995). However, applicants' IM tactics may still have an effect on the validity of structured interview and may affect interview ratings and employment decisions (McFarland et al., 2002; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Indeed, the successful IM tactics of the applicants may result in the organization selecting a less competent but better impression-managed candidate. Previous studies found that even written

ingratiation tactics have a significant impact on evaluations of individuals, and such effects are consistent with those found in face-to-face settings such as employment interviews (Varma, et al., 2006). In addition, Stevens and Kristof (1995) found that IM tactics significantly predict interviewers' evaluations and whether applicants are later granted site visits. They also reported that applicants' warm nonverbal behaviors (such as frequent eye contact and smiling) and ingratiation or self-promotion tactics elicit positive interviewer evaluations and hiring recommendations. As inspired by previous researches, this study predicts that applicants who use more IM tactics in structured interviews will score higher ratings in their interview than applicants who use less IM tactics. It is hypothesized that applicants' IM tactics will be positively related to interviewer rating.

Furthermore, the relative importance of IM tactics to interviewers' evaluations will be different in BDI and SI due to the different focuses of the two interview formats (Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Interview ratings in BDI will be more heavily influenced by the use of self-focused verbal IM tactics than the ratings in SI. It is because self-focused verbal IM tactics helps applicants in expressing favorable past experience. Applicants are able to boast about their past competences and past accomplishments by self-focused verbal IM tactics, and thus create a valuable chance to promote themselves through self-focused verbal IM

tactics in BDI questions. On the other hand, interview ratings in SI will be more heavily influenced by other-focused verbal IM tactics, defensive verbal IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics than the ratings in BDI. For other-focused verbal IM tactics, it is more about relating the applicants themselves to the organization and the interviewer. By this the applicants have a better chance to express their deep understanding of and appreciation to the organization's background and culture, thus elicit favorable ratings for the interview questions in SI. For defensive verbal IM tactics, it will be more influential in the ratings in SI than in BDI. As BDI concerns about past experience and behaviors that have already happened, applicants may not be able to alter any evaluation by defending for their past behavior. However, SI is about future intention, applicants can justify and explain their intended behavior by defensive tactics in SI as those behaviors have not happened. It will be more difficult for interviewer to consider them negatively as they are hypothetical. For non-verbal IM tactics, it will be more influential in the ratings in SI as the persuasiveness of applicants depends more on non-verbal IM tactics in SI than in BDI. In BDI, applicants talk about their past experience and interviewer can base their evaluation on the content of the experience, as it can adequately reflect applicants' competencies and characteristics. However, in SI, applicants talk about their intended behavior in hypothetical situations, it will be more difficult for interviewers

to evaluate applicants' characteristics from those situations, so they may depend more on applicant's non-verbal behavior in assessing their characteristics.

Taken together, the second set of hypotheses concerns the importance of various IM tactics in structured interview ratings. This lead to the following specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Applicants' use of IM tactics will be positively related to their overall interview ratings.

Hypothesis 2b: Applicants' use of self-focused verbal IM tactics will be more positively related to their interview ratings in BDI than in SI.

Hypothesis 2c: Applicants' use of other-focused verbal IM tactics will be more positively related to their interview ratings in SI than in BDI.

Hypothesis 2d: Applicants' use of defensive verbal IM tactics will be more positively related to their interview ratings in SI than in BDI.

Hypothesis 2e: Applicants' use of non-verbal IM tactics will be more positively related to their interview ratings in SI than in BDI.

Individual differences: Individualistic-Collectivistic & Horizontal-Vertical

Personalities

A large number of research studies reported that individual differences influence individuals' behavior (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998; Triandis, 2001). More

specifically, individual differences influence IM behaviors and also affect the effect of IM tactics on interview outcome (Peeters & Lievens, 2006). For instance, many individual difference variables have been associated with the use of IM, including self monitoring, self esteem, agreeableness, extraversion, gender and age (Peeters & Lievens, 2006). In this study, the correlations of various individual difference variables, including individualistic-collectivistic personality and horizontal-vertical personality, and various verbal and non-verbal IM tactics were investigated. In addition, the moderator effects of the individual difference variables on the effect of IM on interview outcome were also examined.

A number of research studies related IM to personality (Hogan et al., 2007; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). They proposed that the personality of interviewees affects the use of particular IM behaviors, which in turn affects interview performance (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Cultural research studies generally supported that people brought up in different cultural background (individualistic versus collectivistic culture, and horizontal versus vertical culture) (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Triandis, 2001; Xie, Chen, & Roy, 2006) and social or family systems (individualistic or collectivistic system) (Dwairy, 2002) differ in their attributes and personalities. In this sense, personalities in terms of cultural attributes seem to have an effect on individuals' IM behavior and may moderate individuals' IM tactics and

ratings in job interviews.

Individuals who score high on individualistic personality emphasize individual initiative, self-development, individual achievement, autonomy, self-reliance and self-respect (Xie et al., 2006). They focus on personal goals and achievement, and value self-efficacy (Triandis, 2001; Varnum, Grossmanna, Katunarab, Nisbetta, & Kitayamaa, 2008). In addition, individualists highly value individual achievement; they believe that individual ability should be and will be rewarded, and they pay close attention to personal goals, personal needs and competitiveness (Xie et al., 2006). In this sense, they may pay more emphasis in showing that they possess the desirable qualities and competencies for the job. They may emphasize more on self-focused IM tactics, such as self-promotion and self-enhancement, in order to secure a positive and competent image from others. For this reason, this study predicts that applicants who are more individualistic will be more likely to use self-focused IM than those who are more collectivistic.

Alternatively, people who score high in collectivistic personality value social norms, cooperation, obligations, interpersonal harmony and group cohesion (Xie et al., 2006). They are more interdependent, focus more on relationships and maintain group harmony (Varnum et al., 2008). In this sense, they may pay more attention in evoking interpersonal attraction or liking, and to make others feel good and

acceptance about themselves. They may use other-focused IM tactics, such as ingratiation, other-enhancement and opinion conformity, in job interviews. In this study, it is hypothesized that applicants who are more collectivistic will be more likely to use other-focused IM than those who are more individualistic.

Apart from individualistic-collectivistic personality, horizontal-vertical personality is also influential to individuals' behavior (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Individuals who score high in horizontal personality emphasize equality in social status. They prefer to view themselves as equal to others in status (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). In this sense, they may feel less necessary to flatter the interviewer as they believe that they are in equal status. In contrast, individuals who score high in vertical personality emphasize hierarchy and authority. They tend to distinguish themselves from others in terms of status (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). In this sense, they may adopt more other-focus IM tactics as they tend to perceive the interviewer as in higher level of the hierarchy and with more authority that they would like to praise them and be liked by them. Therefore, this study predicts that applicants who are more vertical in personality will be more likely to use other-focused IM than those who are more horizontal in personality.

Taken together, the third set of hypotheses focuses on the correlations between the use of IM tactics in structured interview and applicants' individual personality,

which lead to the following specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Applicants who are more individualistic will be more likely to use self-focused IM tactics than those who are more collectivistic in both BDI and SI.

Hypothesis 3b: Applicants who are more collectivistic will be more likely to use other-focused IM tactics than those who are more individualistic in both BDI and SI.

Hypothesis 3c: Applicants who are more vertical in personality will be more likely to use other-focused IM tactics than those who are more horizontal in personality in both BDI and SI.

On the other hand, individuals' personality may also moderate the effect of IM tactics on interview ratings. For instance, people who score high in individualistic personality emphasize more on individual initiative, self-development, individual achievement, autonomy, self-reliance, self-respect and personal goals (Triandis, 2001, Varnum et al., 2008; Xie et al., 2006). This line of thoughts helps individualists to feel more comfortable and competent in adopting the tactic of self-focused IM tactics. Also, their behavior is organized primarily by reference to their own thoughts, feelings and actions, rather than by reference to others (Xie et al., 2006). They may find it easier to recall and present their competencies which are desirable in job setting compare to individual who are less individualistic. Moreover, it is also found that individualists are more analytic, paying more attention in rules

and formal logic, and tend to define themselves in terms of personal attributes (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Varnum et al., 2008). It may also facilitate their recall of job-related qualities and enhance their performance in adopting self-focused IM tactics. Conversely, people who are more collectivistic focus on context more than content in making attribution and in communication (Triandis, 2001). It may hinder their recall and presentation in their job-related competency in job interview. They may focus more on other irrelevant situational factors than their job-related competencies. In addition, people who are more collectivistic are more holistic, attending to the entire field and assigning causality to it, and they tend to make relatively little use of categories and formal logic (Nisbett et al., 2001, Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005). This may hinder their performance in categorizing their past behavior into different competencies and qualities in adopting self-focused IM tactics during job interview. Following this line of thoughts, this study predicts that the relation between self-focused IM tactics and interview rating will be moderated by individualistic-collectivistic personality.

Furthermore, applicants who score high in horizontal personality emphasize equality and they prefer to view themselves as equal to others in social status (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). They may feel less comfortable with using other-focus IM tactics, such as ingratiation, other-enhancement and opinion conformity during

job interview, in which they have to view the interviewer as more superior and create a status difference between them and the interviewer. On the contrary, individuals who score high in vertical personality emphasize hierarchy and authority (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). They are more ready to interpret themselves and others in terms of social status. They may feel comfortable in praising the interviewer as they accept that the interviewer is in higher level of the hierarchy and with more authority. In this sense, this study predicts that the relation between other-focused IM tactics and interview rating will be moderated by horizontal-vertical personality.

The forth set of hypothesis examines whether the relation between IM tactics and interview ratings will be moderated by individual difference variables. It can be translated into the following predictions:

Hypothesis 4a: The positive relationship between self-focused IM tactics and interview rating will be moderated by individualist-collectivist personality.

Hypothesis 4b: The positive relationship between other-focused IM tactics and interview rating will be moderated by horizontal-vertical personality.

In a nutshell, this study extend previous research studies by conducting analysis to examine the relationship of IM tactics and interview formats, the effectiveness of IM tactics on interview ratings in different interview formats, the relationship between IM tactics and individual personality, and the moderator effects on the

relation between IM tactics and interview ratings.

Chapter 2: Method

Participants

Applicants

One hundred and fifty nine undergraduate students from a renowned university in Hong Kong were recruitment for this study. They either received honorarium or course credits for their participation. The majority of the participants were Chinese (86.8%, $N=138$), others were from the US or Europe (8.2%, $N=13$) or other Asian countries (5%, $N=8$). Majority of them were female (66%, $N=105$) and aged under 25 years (99.4%, $N=156$). Most of them grew up in Hong Kong (54.1%, $N=86$), some in Mainland China (28.3%, $N=45$) or other Asian countries (10.1%, $N=16$), and the remaining in US or Europe (6.9%, $N=11$). Among the participants, 26.4% ($N=42$) were studying business-related subjects, 25.8% ($N=41$) studying science-related subjects, 18.9% ($N=30$) studying art-related subjects and 15.7% ($N=25$) studying social science subjects. Around 80% of the participants had the experience of attending at least one formal selection interview. More than 70% had either full-time or part-time working experience.

Interview Raters

Two experienced interview raters (1 male and 1 female, mean age = 53.5) were invited to evaluate the applicants by watching the video-taped interviews. This

practice of evaluation was adopted in previous research study (Peeters & Lievens, 2006). On average, these interview raters had 15.5 years of experience in conducting employment interviews. Both interview raters indicated that they were familiar with BDI and SI questions as part of their interview practices. Both interview raters evaluated all video-taped applicants ($N = 159$). Each applicant was independently rated by two interview raters and inter-rater reliabilities could be computed. Pearson r was computed to check the inter-rater reliabilities. Inter-rater reliabilities were .958 and .931 for BDI and SI respectively, indicating inter-rater reliability of interview rating was high in both types of interview formats.

Procedure

Applicants were invited to attend a job interview for a hypothetical management trainee position in a multi-national company. Job advertisement and job description for the position were provided to the applicants in advance (see Appendix A). The job advertisement and job description were modified from real job advertisement and job description. This ensured applicants' understanding of the job requirements and allowed the interview to be realistic. Applicants were randomly assigned to either BDI or SI conditions. All interviews were conducted in English so as to stimulate real job settings and allow fair comparison. One female master student in Industrial-Organizational Psychology conducted all the interviews

($N = 159$). The female master student had had experience in working in an human resources consultancy which specialized in recruitment, assessment, and development. She had gone through interviewer training and had had experience in conducting selection interviews. In the interviews, questions were asked to assess five competencies: analytical skills, resilience, proactiveness, interpersonal sensitivity and communication skills, which were developed and adopted in previous selection interview for similar position in similar industry (see Appendix B and Appendix C). All applicants received the same questions. Similar to previous IM studies (e.g., Ellis et al., 2002), prompting during the interview was reduced to minimum. The interview duration was approximately 20 minutes and the interviews were video-taped under participants' consensus. After the interview, the participants filled out a post-interview questionnaire (see Appendix D). The whole process lasted for around 45 minutes for each participant.

Interview evaluation and ratings

The video-taped interviews were sent to interview raters for evaluation. For the interview raters, they were blinded to the study hypotheses. A briefing session was provided in advance for them to be familiarized with the interview questions (see Appendix B and Appendix C), the competency model (see Appendix E), and the BARS (see Appendix F). Interview raters were asked to rate all interviews in a

standardized manner. They were asked to rate each applicant on the competencies on a 5-point Likert scale immediately after watching the video-tape of each interview. Given that each applicant was independently rated by two interviewers, inter-rater reliabilities were able to be computed. The inter-rater reliabilities were .958 and .931 for BDI and SI respectively, indicating inter-rater reliability of interview rating was high in both types of interview formats. The competency ratings were summed up as the composite interview rating for the applicants. The averaged rating across the two interviewers was taken as the applicants' interview rating for analysis. Following the practice of previous research study (Peeters & Lievens, 2006), the averaged composite rating was used in the analysis.

Coding of Impression Management Tactics

The verbal and nonverbal IM tactics demonstrated by the one hundred and fifty nine video-taped applicants were frequency-coded by four trained psychology undergraduate students (3 males and 1 female, mean age = 20.5 years). Coders were blinded to the interview ratings and the study hypotheses. The training and the coding approaches were similar to those of previous studies (Ellis et al., 2002; McFarland et al., 2003; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Coders received training on the coding system before actual coding. All coders were asked to study the behavioral definitions of different kinds of IM tactics, after that, they

had a chance to clarify with the researcher any questions concerning the definitions. Then, they were asked to code several practice interviews to ensure that they were able to correctly differentiate and code different kinds of IM tactics. This ensured all coders understood the category definitions and were able to discriminate different tactics properly to enhanced reliability. Adopting the practice of previous study (Peeters & Lievens, 2006), absolute IM frequencies were used in the analysis. Given that the IM tactics demonstrated by each applicant was independently coded by two coders, inter-rater reliabilities were able to be computed. Inter-rater agreement was satisfactory for all IM categories in both interview formats. For BDI, Pearson r was .886, .924, .846, and .777 for self-focused IM tactics, other-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics respectively. For SI, Pearson r was .921, .936, .909, and .848 respectively.

Measures

Structured interview questions and Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS)

A competency model (see Appendix E) was modified for the position of management trainee. The model was developed and adopted in previous relevant project. The dimensions were labeled as analytical skills, resilience, proactiveness, interpersonal sensitivity, and communication skills. Two questions were developed for each dimension (with the exception for communication skills, which were

assessed by observing applicants' interactions throughout the interview). In addition, the BARS (see Appendix F) based on this competency model was also modified. Behavior was described based on a 5-point Likert scale. Interview raters were asked to do their ratings base on this scale.

The interview comprised of 8 questions, by following the methodology of pervious research study (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007), the BDI questions and SI questions were identical with the exception of verb tense (i.e., "what did you do?" and "what willl you do?"). An example BDI questions (designed to measure analytical and problem solving skills) was "Tell me a time that you effectively handled conflicting opinions in your previous experience. What did you do? Why did you do that? What was the outcome?". To create a measure of interview performance, the ratings across all competencies in each interview were summed up and the total composite score was taken as the interview rating for the applicant. For the interview ratings, Pearson r was computed to check the inter-rater reliabilities. Inter-rater reliabilities for the composite interview rating score were .958 for BDI and .931 for SI. For the ratings for the five competencies (analytical skills, resilience, proactiveness, interpersonal sensitivity, and communication skills), the inter-rater reliabilities were .942, .836, .837, .832 and .853 respectively for BDI, and .933, .790, .784, .721 and .782 respectively for SI. This indicates that inter-rater

reliability of interview rating is high in both types of interview formats.

Individualistic-Collectivistic and Horizontal-Vertical Personality Scales

Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand's (1995) scale was used to measure individualistic-collectivistic personality and horizontal-vertical personality. This scale composed of 32 items measured on a 9-point Likert scale. In the individualistic-collectivistic scale, lower score indicated individualistic personality and higher score indicated collectivistic personality, whereas in the horizontal-vertical scale, lower score indicated horizontal personality and higher score indicated vertical personality. The scale showed satisfactory internal reliabilities, with Cronbach's alpha of .811 for individualistic-collectivistic personality and .821 for horizontal-vertical personality.

Coding system for IM tactics

All the interviews were video-taped for coding. Coders were trained to identify and categorize the IM tactics base on the definition and coding system following the practice of previous research study (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Verbal and nonverbal behaviors were coded separately. Verbal tactics were coded while the coders did not see the videotapes but only listened to sound tracks of the interviews. Nonverbal tactics were coded while they watched the videotapes with the sound turned off and counted the number of times applicants used a particular nonverbal

behavior (Peeters & Lievens, 2006). Coders recorded the frequency with which the applicants displayed each IM behavior following the method of previous research study (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Four IM composites were created for each video-taped applicant, namely self-focused IM tactics, other-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics. The composite of self-focused IM tactics consisted of the sum of the frequencies of self-promotion and self-enhancement, whereas the composite of other-focused IM tactics comprised of the frequencies of ingratiation, other-enhancement and opinion conformity. The composite of defensive IM tactics consisted of the summed frequencies of justifications, apologies, and excuses. Finally, the composite of nonverbal IM tactics composite was calculated by summing up the frequencies of smiling, eye contact, hand gesture, nodding and proper attire. Inter-rater agreement was satisfactory for all IM categories in both interview formats. For BDI, Pearson r was .886, .924, .846, and .777 for self-focused IM tactics, other-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics respectively. For SI, Pearson r was .921, .936, .909, and .848 respectively.

Chapter 3: Results

The Use of Impression Management Tactics

Means and standard deviations of applicants' IM frequencies in different interview formats are presented in Table 1.

Table1. *Means and standard deviations of applicants' IM frequencies in different interview formats*

IM tactics	Across interview formats (N=159)		BDI (N=83)		SI (N=76)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Self-focused	8.315	4.256	10.147	4.177	6.434	3.459
Other-focused	8.952	4.370	8.909	4.319	9.000	4.455
Defensive	1.511	1.405	1.865	1.427	1.078	1.257
Non-verbal	291.610	139.394	315.560	152.884	264.920	118.074

For hypotheses 1a to 1d, the use of various IM tactics in the two interview formats was tested. MANOVA was conducted with interview format as fixed factors and with self-focused, other-focused, defensive, and nonverbal IM tactics as a set of four dependent variables. This MANOVA shows multivariate main effects of interview format, $F(1, 125) = 10.653, p < .001$. Follow-up univariate analyses reveal that the main effect of interview format is significant for self-focused IM tactics ($F(1, 125) = 29.332, p < .001$), defensive IM tactics ($F(1, 125) = 12.986, p < .001$), and non-verbal IM tactics ($F(1, 125) = 5.389, p < .05$), but not for other-focused IM tactics ($F(1, 125) = .112, p = .739 > .05$). Independent sample t-tests reveal that

applicants used significantly more self-focused tactics in BDI ($M=10.147$) than in SI ($M=6.434$), $t(152)=6$, $p<.001$; more defensive tactics in BDI ($M=1.865$) than in SI ($M=1.078$), $t(140)=3.449$, $p<.001$; and more non-verbal tactics in BDI ($M=315.560$) than in SI ($M=118.074$), $t(146)=2.236$, $p<.001$. There is no significant effect for interview format on the use of other-focus IM tactics, $t(145)=-.126$, $p=.9>.05$. These results suggest that applicants used more IM tactics, including self-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics in BDI than in SI. These support hypotheses 1a, 1c, and 1d.

The Effectiveness of Impression Management Tactics

The second set of hypotheses concerns the influences of verbal and nonverbal IM tactics on interview ratings. Correlations between the absolute IM frequencies and interview ratings were computed. As shown in Table 2, self-focused verbal tactics ($r=.285$, $p<.01$), other-focused verbal tactics ($r=.210$, $p<.01$), and nonverbal tactics ($r=.302$, $p<.01$) correlate positively with interview ratings across interview formats. Hypothesis 2a is generally supported, except for defensive IM tactics.

Table 2. *Correlations between applicants' IM tactics and overall interview ratings and Fisher's z transformation for the correlations between BDI and SI*

IM tactics	Pearson <i>r</i>			Fisher's <i>z</i>
	Across interview formats (N=159)	BDI (N=83)	SI (N=76)	
Self-focused	.258**	.200**	.351**	1.012
Other-focused	.210**	.295**	.093	1.302
Defensive	.023	-.085	.180	1.651*
Non-verbal	.302**	.188	.507**	2.276*

Notes: **p*<.05, ***p*<.01

More specifically, whether there is a difference between BDI and SI with regard to the effectiveness of IM use was also examined. Table 2 shows that a different pattern of relationship emerged. Self-focused IM tactics were positively related with interview ratings across interview formats ($r=.258, p<.01$), and in both BDI and SI ($r=.200, p<.01$ and $r=.351, p<.01$ respectively). Other-focused IM tactics were positively related with interview ratings across interview formats($r=.210, p<.01$), and only in BDI ($r=.295, p<.01$), but not in SI ($r=.093, p=.223>.05$). In addition, non-verbal IM tactics were positively related with interview ratings across interview formats ($r=.302, p<.01$), and in SI ($r=.507, p<.01$).

For hypotheses 2b to 2e, the Fisher's z transformation was computed to check the differences between IM effectiveness across BDI and SI. There were no significant differences for the effectiveness of self-focused and other-focused verbal IM tactics in BDI and SI ($z = 1.012, p>.05$ and $z = 1.302, p>.05$ respectively).

Hypotheses 2b and 2c are not supported. Nevertheless, the results support

hypotheses 2d and 2e. Defensive verbal IM tactics and non-verbal IM tactics are significantly more positively related to interview ratings in SI than in BDI ($z = 1.651$, $p < .05$ and $z = 2.276$, $p < .05$ respectively).

Impression Management Tactics and Individual Differences

The third set of hypotheses focuses on the correlations between the use of various IM tactics in structured interview and applicants' personality differences. As shown in Table 3, hypotheses 3a to 3c are supported. Individualistic personality was found to be significantly correlated with the use of self-focused IM tactics, in which applicants who were more individualistic used more self-focused IM than those who were more collectivistic ($r = -.152$, $p < .05$). Also, collectivistic personality significantly correlates with the use of other-focused IM tactics, in which applicants who were more collectivistic used more other-focused IM than those who were more individualistic ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). In addition, vertical personality also significantly correlates with the use of other-focused IM tactics, which indicates that applicants who were more vertical in personality used more other-focused IM than those who were more horizontal in personality ($r = .139$, $p < .05$).

Table 3. *Correlations between individual differences and IM tactics and interview ratings*

	Across interview formats (N=159)		BDI (N=83)		SI (N=76)	
	I-C	H-V	I-C	H-V	I-C	H-V
Self-focused IM	-.152*	-.142*	-.182	-.132	-.101	-.151
Other-focused IM	.150*	.139*	.185	.038	.092	.249*
Defensive IM	.139*	.142*	.181	.271**	.093	-.073
Non-verbal IM	-.149*	.143*	-.107	.146	-.237*	.152
Interview ratings	-.149*	-.145*	-.109	-.145	-.209*	-.136

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Moderating Effects of Individual Differences

The forth set of hypothesis deals with the influence of applicants' individual difference variables on the effects of various IM tactics on interview ratings. It is hypothesized that these effects may be moderated by individualistic-collectivistic personality and horizontal-vertical personality. These moderating-effect hypotheses were examined in two ways. First, the correlations between the IM tactics, and interview ratings across both interview formats (see Table 2 and 3) were compared. After that, as a formal test for the moderating effect of individual differences, several moderated regression analyses were also conducted in which interview ratings was regressed on the IM tactics used (self-focused, other-focused, defensive or non-verbal) in the first step, followed by IM tactics used and individual differences (individualistic-collectivistic personality or horizontal-vertical personality) in the second step, and added the product term (the interaction) in the

third step.

Hypothesis 4a states that the effect of self-focused IM tactics on interview ratings will be moderated by individualistic-collectivistic personality. The correlation results show that higher self-focused IM tactics used is related to higher interview rating across interview formats ($r=.258, p<.01$), in BDI ($r=.200, p<.01$) and in SI ($r=.351, p<.01$) (see table 2), and individualistic-collectivistic personality is related to all IM tactics ($r=-.152, p<.05, r=.150, p<.05, r=.139, p<.05$, and $r=-.149, p<.05$ for self-focused IM tactics, other-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics respectively) and interview ratings ($r=-.145, p<.05$) (see table 3). However, Hypothesis 4a is not supported by the moderated regression analysis, $\beta = -.013, t(147)=-.177, p=.86>.05$ (see Table 4). The moderated regression analysis is also run separately for BDI and SI, nevertheless, the results are still not supported.

Table 4. *Moderated Regression Analysis of the Moderating Effects of Individualistic-Collectivist Personality on the Relationship between Self-focused IM tactics and Interview Ratings*

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
	β	β	β
Self-focused IM	.236**	.219**	.356
I-C personality	-	-.517	-.410
Self-focused IM x I-C personality	-	-	-.013
Cumulative R square	.067**	.084**	.084
Changes in R square	-	.017*	.000

Notes: * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Hypothesis 4b states that the effect of other-focused IM tactics on interview ratings will be moderated by horizontal-vertical personality. The correlation results show that higher other-focused IM tactics used is related to higher interview rating across interview formats ($r=.210, p<.01$) and in BDI ($r=.295, p<.01$) (see table 2), and horizontal-vertical personality is related to all IM tactics ($r=-.142, p<.05, r=.139, p<.05, r=.142, p<.05$, and $r=.143, p<.05$ for self-focused IM tactics, other-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics respectively) and interview ratings ($r=-.145, p<.05$) (see table 3). However, Hypothesis 4b is not supported by the moderated regression analysis, $\beta = -.013, t(140)=-.586, p=.559>.05$ (see Table 5). The moderated regression analysis is also run separately for BDI and SI, nevertheless, the results are still not supported.

Table 5. *Moderated Regression Analysis of the Moderating Effects of Horizontal-Vertical Personality on the Relationship between Other-focused IM tactics and Interview Ratings*

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
	β	β	β
Other-focused IM	.236**	.222**	.341
H-V personality	-	-.555	-.438
Other-focused IM x H-V personality	-	-	-.013
Cumulative R square	.067**	.078*	.078*
Changes in R square	-	.011*	.00

Notes: * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Chapter 4: Discussion

The present study shows that IM tactics significantly influence interview ratings. This is the first among Chinese research studies using a behavioral approach on structured interviews, and differentiates the effects of IM on BDI and SI separately. With a larger and more comprehensive sample compared with similar studies in the past, this study not only confirmed the findings of previous research studies (Ellis et al., 2002; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007) but also enhanced its generalizability because, as outlined in previous chapters, a large group of participants was recruited from a renowned local university for this study, one hundred and fifty nine interviews were video-taped instead of audio-recorded or by self-reported questionnaire, and professional interviewers were invited to conduct the ratings for result analysis. Given the diverse cultural background of the participants by which the situation of the working population in real life environment could be represented, the findings of the present study is highly accurate and reliable. Besides, apart from supporting previous research findings, the present study also presented some interesting observations which may shed light on real life applications.

First set of hypotheses

As shown by the results of analysis, applicants generally use more IM tactics in

BDI than in SI. This supports hypotheses 1a, 1c and 1d namely applicants used more self-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics in BDI than in SI. However, the finding results do not significantly support hypothesis 1b.

Applicants did not significantly use more other-focused IM tactics in SI than in BDI.

One possible explanation for this insignificant relation is that job interview is a one-on-one situation where applicants were only responding to the interviewer in the fixed period of time. Applicants might try to maintain a harmonious relationship with the interviewer at least within the interview period, no matter in BDI or SI.

Stevens and Kristof (1995) also found that applicants across interview types used significantly fewer ingratiation tactics than self-promotion tactics. Therefore, it might be justifiable that the frequency of other-focused IM tactics used in this study was similar in either BDI or SI conditions, and do not have significant difference between the two interview formats.

Second set of hypotheses

The second set of hypotheses is generally supported. The results show that self-focused verbal tactics, other-focused verbal tactics, and nonverbal tactics correlate positively with overall interview ratings across interview formats. However, defensive IM tactics do not significantly correlate with interview rating in any interview format. This may suggest that defensive IM tactics are not very functional

and only play a minor role in the interview setting. Stevens and Kristof (1995) found a clear absence of defensive IM utterances during interviews. They proposed that individuals likely prefer to concentrate on constructing their image through the use of assertive IM tactics rather than breaking down their image through the use of defensive IM tactics. During the interview, applicants try to persuade the interviewer that they are competent and capable (Ellis et al., 2002; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Stevens & Kristof, 1995) instead of simply protecting their self images. Applicants are performing more proactively rather than simply defending against some negative incidents during job interviews. On the side of the interviewers, they will more likely consider applicants' positive competencies and job-related qualifications, and evaluate and reward them accordingly. They will not likely deduct applicants' ratings due to some particular less favorable incidents. In addition, if the negative incidents were fatal, simply adopting defensive IM tactics might not be able to change the situation or regain the ratings. In this sense, defensive IM tactics may not be influential to interview ratings in either interview format.

On the other hand, there are no significant differences on the influence of self-focused and other-focused IM tactics on interview ratings in BDI and in SI. This reflects that self-focused and other-focused IM tactics are important and influential in both BDI and SI. Nevertheless, defensive and non-verbal IM are more positively

related to interview ratings in SI than in BDI which support the hypotheses. This implies that interviewees attending a job interview in real life situations should pay more attention to their non-verbal behaviour, such as smile more, look more into the interviewer, and demonstrate more body gesture, in order to present a more competent image to the interviewer.

Third and Forth set of hypotheses

As shown by the results of analysis, applicants who were more individualistic used more self-focused IM than those who were more collectivistic, while applicants who were more collectivistic and vertical in personality used more other-focused IM than those who were more individualistic and horizontal respectively. The third set of hypotheses is supported.

Nevertheless, the forth set of hypotheses is not supported. Individual differences, both individualistic-collectivistic personality and horizontal-vertical personality, do not significantly moderate the effect of IM tactics on interview ratings. One of the explanations is that applicants may have gone through interview trainings that have significant influence on their interview behaviors. Previous research studies confirmed that interview training could influence interview performance (Braukmann, 1974; Kelly, Wildman, & Berler, 1980). In this study, many of the applicants had experience in job interviews, and they might also have

gone through interview trainings. Universities and other organizations often provide interview trainings to their students in order to better equip them for job interviews. These trainings indeed shape applicants' interview behavior. In typical interview trainings, standardized interviewing skills are taught, such as keeping eye contact, be confident, expressing oneself clearly, etc. These standardized interview skills minimize the individual differences of applicants in their interview behavior. Applicants tend to perform along with the way they were trained, instead of their "natural" behavior. In order to fit the perceived requirements of the job interviews, applicants tend to follow the normative and the standard way in performing job interviews. Applicants practice the standard interview skills and minimize the effects of individual attributes on their IM tactics utilization. This may be the reason why individual differences did not significantly moderate the effect of IM tactics on interview ratings in the study.

General Discussion

The comprehensive analysis of the one hundred and fifty nine structured interviews indicated that all of the applicants used some forms of IM tactics during job interviews. Ellis et al. (2002) suggested that if organizations wish to maximize the benefits of structured interview formats, they should be aware of, and concerned about, applicants' use of IM tactics as well because this may introduce errors to the

assessment process. If IM can really affect interview ratings, what can employers do to minimize applicants' use of IM? According to the findings of the present study, if employers want to minimize applicants' IM in job interviews, they may consider using SI instead of BDI as the format of interview. Previous research studies agreed that applicants' use of ingratiation and self-promotion tactics appeared to depend on the cues inherent in interview question type (Ellis et al., 2002). According to the findings of the present study, applicants use more self-focused IM tactics, defensive IM tactics, and non-verbal IM tactics in BDI than in SI, whereas there is no significant difference in using other-focused IM tactics between the two formats. As a whole, applicants use much less IM tactics in SI than in BDI. This may be due to the fact that SI is more job-focused and only asks about hypothetical situations that applicants may encounter in the job. Therefore, if employers want to minimize applicants' use of IM tactics, they may consider using SI as interview format as far as possible.

However, only minimizing the frequency of applicants' IM tactics use during job interview may not be effective in reducing IM influence. Results from this study show that interview ratings in SI is more prone to the influence of defensive and non-verbal IM than the interview ratings in BDI. Therefore, simply adopting SI may be able to reduce the frequency of IM use, but the effect of reducing the influence of

IM tactics on interview ratings is still unknown.

Nevertheless, adopting IM tactics in job interviews is not necessarily undesirable. Employers should not see IM too negatively or totally avoid the approach. Many organizations expect some degree of IM tactics during job interviews and this has indeed already become a norm. Ellis et al. (2002) agreed that answers involving self-promotion and ingratiation may be very job-relevant and convey applicants fit with the job and the organization. They suggested that self-promotion strategies dealt with events that the applicants had encountered in the past, whereas ingratiation strategies dealt with the values, beliefs, opinions, or characteristics of the interviewer or the organization. Both strategies, if properly deployed and truly reflect the applicants' characteristics, would provide valuable inputs to facilitate the interviewer in his/ her rating and decision. (Ellis et al., 2002)

Whereas IM may influence interview ratings, this influence may indeed reflect some important competencies that are essential to the job. For example, insurance salespeople may perform better if they are able to use ingratiation tactics when interacting with clients (Ellis et al., 2002). Indeed, the use of IM is important in interpersonal interaction and communication. Applicants who can effectively adopt IM tactics may also score high in competencies such as interpersonal sensitivity and communication skills in the interview ratings. Some behavioral anchors in

interpersonal sensitivity are similar to IM, such as understanding others' opinion and maintaining harmonic atmosphere; whereas some are similar to communication skills, such as providing appropriate verbal and non-verbal response. These behaviors are indeed important to the job and are measured by the BARS. Therefore, simply trying to get rid of IM may not be recommendable. Ability in acquiring and demonstrating IM tactics in the most appropriate way should be recommended instead and would no doubt be conducive to career success.

Furthermore, using IM tactics during job interviews reflect that the applicants at least have the awareness of self-presentation, and they take the job opportunity seriously. It reflects that the applicants care about and value the interview and the job offer, and under this drive they strive to present their best selves to the interviewer and the organization. This may be one of the important indicators of how motivated the applicants are in working and making contribution to the organization.

While reducing IM influence may not be the best option in improving the utility of job interviews, using other methods to optimize the selection and assessment procedure may be more preferable. Organizations may consider developing competency models for different positions. Also, they should review and update their competency models on regular basis in order to maintain its accuracy

and validity. This will allow organizations to know what kind of employees that are looking for, and provide a fair evaluation during selection to assist them to look for someone who will fit the job requirements totally. Furthermore, organizations should also consider including other selection procedures in addition to job interviews. Schmidt & Hunter (1998) suggested that work sample tests, general mental ability tests and job knowledge tests are of high predictive validity of future job performance ($r = .54, .51$, and $.48$ respectively). Organizations may also consider combining different selection tools to improve the predictive validity of their selection and assessment procedures.

Other than the above, organizations may also consider adopting the Assessment Centre (AC) approach in their selection process. AC is a standardized approach in the evaluation of applicants' behavior based on multiple evaluations including job-related simulations, interviews, and psychological tests. AC is used to evaluate applicants on behaviors relevant to the critical competencies of the job. It is a more comprehensive evaluation tool as it can assess many aspects of the applicants. It is also more objective due to the adoption of multiple assessors. Previous research studies also supported the predictive, criterion, and construct validity of AC (Chan, 1996; Klimoski & Brickner, 1987; Russell & Domm, 1995). Adopting AC may more accurately evaluate individual characteristics of the applicants and optimize

the selection and assessment procedures of the organizations.

Limitations and Future Directions

Due to resources and time constraints, the present study only focused on university students as subjects. However, this would not affect the significance and values of its findings because they are potential employees and are able to reflect major employment phenomena. Future research studies may focus on other population groups, such as the working population in a particular discipline, to find out if there are other interesting findings regarding their use of IM tactics in selection interviews. It can be foreseen that the working population will demonstrate IM tactics quite differently from the subjects of the present study who are employees-to-be. It is also believed that employees in different industries or disciplines may adopt different IM tactics to different extent so as to fit the environment and norm of their respective circumstances.

Future research studies can also investigate the effectiveness of interview training. Interview training is getting more and more popular in this competitive job market, its effect on the success of job applications undoubtedly worth further investigation.

Conclusion

This study reveals some important relationships between conceptual variables.

Interview formats play an important role in IM tactics use, and in turn influence interview ratings. Individual personality, experience and training may be some of the influential factors affecting interview performance and ratings. All these findings of this study contribute to human resources practitioners and organizations in their design and review of effective selection and assessment policies.

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Appendix A: Applicant’s Instruction, Job Advertisement, and Job Description

You are going to attend a job interview for the position of management trainee in a multi-national company. The career prospect of this position is very good and it paves the way to a successful future career. There is keen competition for this position. Only competent candidates are able to get into this interview. Please see the recruitment advertisement from the company:

<p><u>Recruiting Management Trainee</u></p> <p>You can gain knowledge and experience required for promotion to management positions under direction of experienced personnel, rotate to various divisions in the company, and gain valuable management experience by our management trainee program.</p>
<p><u>Essential Job Functions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receives training and performs duties in several departments such as Finance, Client Services, Sales, Operations, Healthcare Data Solutions and IT.2. Learns line and staff functions, operations, management viewpoints and company policies and practices that affect each phase of business.3. Sets performance goals and objectives with upper management.4. Monitors performance progress with management and key trainers.5. Observes experienced workers to acquire knowledge of methods, procedures, and standards required for performance of departmental duties.6. Receives training in functions and operations of related departments to facilitate subsequent transferability between departments and to provide greater promotional opportunities.
<p><u>Minimum Requirements</u></p> <p>Strong written, verbal, analytical and presentation skills. Ability to interact effectively with a wide range of staff throughout the company. Position requires proficiency in Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint. Extensive travel may be required depending upon the position.</p>
<p><u>Salary</u></p> <p>\$25000 + bonus</p>

The purpose of the interview is to assess your ability to perform the job. You will be asked several questions about your behavior in different situations. The interview will be conducted in English as the company is an international company and English is the common medium of communication. You are a competent candidate and you are eager to get the position. You will perform in the best way you can to get the job.

Appendix B: Behavioral Description Interview Questions

- Welcome the candidate.
- Introduce yourself.
I am the human resource manager of the company. I am responsible for the recruitment of management trainee.
- Explain that **20mins** are allocated for the interview.
We are going to have a 20-minute interview which allows me to gather more information from you and see if you are suitable for the position.
- Invite any questions from the candidate before you start.
- Ask for background opening information
 - *Self introduction*
 - *Year in school*
 - *Major*
 - *Strengths and weaknesses*
 - *Reasons for applying*

Interview questions

<p>Analytical and Problem Solving Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ Tell me a time that you prioritized resources in problem solving in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?✧ Tell me a time that you effectively handled conflicting opinions in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?
<p>Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ Tell me a time that you faced challenges in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?✧ Tell me a time that you effectively handled stress in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?

Proactiveness	<div>✧ Tell me a time that you took the initiative to solve problems in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?</div> <div>✧ Tell me a time that you initiated to seek ways to improve self, job knowledge and skills in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?</div>
Interpersonal Sensitivity	<div>✧ Tell me a time that you demonstrated empathetic understanding in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?</div> <div>✧ Tell me a time that you were able to resolve interpersonal conflict in your previous experience.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What did you do?- Why did you do that?- What was the outcome?- How did you feel?</div>

Appendix C: Situational Interview Questions

- Welcome the candidate.
- Introduce yourself.
I am the human resource manager of the company. I am responsible for the recruitment of management trainee.
- Explain that **20mins** are allocated for the interview.
We are going to have a 20-minute interview which allows me to gather more information from you and see if you are suitable for the position.
- Invite any questions from the candidate before you start.
- Ask for background opening information
 - *Self introduction*
 - *Year in school*
 - *Major*
 - *Strengths and weaknesses*
 - *Reasons for applying*

Interview questions

<p>Analytical and Problem Solving Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ In what way you can prioritize resources in problem solving in your future career.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What will you do?- Why you will do that?- What will be the expected outcome?- How will you feel?✧ In what way you can effectively handle conflicting opinions in your future career.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What will you do?- Why you will do that?- What will be the expected outcome?- How will you feel?
<p>Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ In what way you can face challenges in your future career.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What will you do?- Why you will do that?- What will be the expected outcome?- How will you feel?✧ In what way you can effectively handle stress in your future career.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What will you do?- Why you will do that?- What will be the expected outcome?- How will you feel?

Proactiveness	<div>✧ In what way you can take the initiative to solve problems in your future career.</div> <div><div>- What will you do?</div><div>- Why you will do that?</div><div>- What will be the expected outcome?</div><div>- How will you feel?</div></div> <div>✧ In what way you can initiative to seek ways to improve self, job knowledge and skills in your future career.</div> <div><div>- What will you do?</div><div>- Why you will do that?</div><div>- What will be the expected outcome?</div><div>- How will you feel?</div></div>
Interpersonal Sensitivity	<div>✧ In what way you can demonstrate empathetic understanding in your future career.</div> <div><div>- What will you do?</div><div>- Why you will do that?</div><div>- What will be the expected outcome?</div><div>- How will you feel?</div></div> <div>✧ In what way you will be able to resolve interpersonal</div> <div><div>- What will you do?</div><div>- Why you will do that?</div><div>- What will be the expected outcome?</div><div>- How will you feel?</div></div>

Appendix D: Post-Interview Questionnaire

This questionnaire is anonymous, and there are no right or wrong answers.

We want to know if you strongly agree or disagree with some statements. If you strongly agree enter a 9 in the blank space; if you strongly disagree, enter a 1 in that space; if you are unsure or think that the question does not apply to you, enter a 5 next to the statement.

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree			
1	My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	Winning is everything	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3	I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	It annoys me when other people perform better than I do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6	It is important to me that I do my job better than others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	I like sharing little things with my neighbors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	I enjoy working in situations involving competition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	The well-being of my co-workers is important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	I often do "my own thing"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11	If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12	Competition is the law of nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	If a co-worker gets a prize I would feel proud	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14	Being a unique individual is important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	To me, pleasure is spending time with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

16	When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
17	Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
18	Without competition it is not possible to have a good society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
19	I feel good when I cooperate with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
20	Some people emphasize winning; I am not one of them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
21	It is important to me that I respect decisions made by my groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
22	I rather depend on myself than on others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
23	Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
24	I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
25	Parents and children must stay together, as much as possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
26	My personal identity independent from others is very important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
27	It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
28	My personal identity is very important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
29	I am a unique person, separate from others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
30	I respect the majority's wishes in groups of which I am a member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
31	I enjoy being unique and different from others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
32	It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Personal information

Gender

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

Age range

- ☐ Below 20
☐ 21-25
☐ 26-30
☐ Above 30

Nationality: _____

Place you grow up: _____

Year of study

- ☐ Year 1
☐ Year 2
☐ Year 3
☐ Year 4 or above

Faculty: _____

Academic background

- ☐ Local student
☐ Exchange student
☐ Mainland student

How many formal selection interview have you experienced?

- ☐ 0
☐ 1-3
☐ 4-6
☐ 7 or more

Do you have any full time job experience?

- ☐ Yes, how long did/ does it last? ☐ No
- ☐ Less than a month
 - ☐ 1-3 month
 - ☐ 4-6 month
 - ☐ 7-9 month
 - ☐ 10-12 month
 - ☐ More than a year

Do you have any part time job experience?

- ☐ Yes, how long did/ does it last? ☐ No
- ☐ Less than a month
 - ☐ 1-3 month
 - ☐ 4-6 month
 - ☐ 7-9 month
 - ☐ 10-12 month
 - ☐ More than a year

Appendix E: Competency Model

Competency Model
Communication Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Expresses ideas in a clear and persuasive manner- Demonstrates active listening
Analytical skills and Problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identifies the root causes of problems- Demonstrates innovative thinking- Plans and prioritizes resources in problem solving- Generates tailor-made solutions- Handles conflicting opinions effectively
Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Effectively handles stress- Is receptive, tolerant and resilient in process of achieving results
Proactive <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Takes initiative to solve problems- Shows initiatives to seek ways to improve self, job knowledge and skills
Interpersonal sensitivity <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demonstrates empathetic understanding- Beware of clients', coworkers' and organization's needs without overriding them

Appendix F: Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS)

Analytical skills and Problem solving				
Identifies the root causes of problems; Demonstrates innovative thinking; Plans and prioritizes resources in problem solving;				
Generates tailor-made solutions; Handles conflicting opinions effectively				
1 - Low	2	3 - Medium	4	5 - High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fails to identify the causes of problems		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to identify some causes of problems		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to identify the root causes of problems based
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Only sticks to one's experience and rules, fails to demonstrate innovative thinking when creativity is required		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mainly sticks to one's past experience but do demonstrate innovative thinking sometimes when creativity is required		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Integrates experience with innovative thinking which can generate appropriate solutions whenever creativity is required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fails to plan and prioritize available resources and information throughout the problem-solving process		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to plan and prioritize available resources and information throughout the problem-solving process		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to plan and prioritize available resources and information efficiently throughout the problem-solving process
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fails to generate appropriate solutions		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to generate general solutions based on factual information		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to generate tailor-made solutions based on both factual

				information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fails to handle conflicting opinions		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to generate solutions that balance conflicting opinions from different parties sometimes		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is able to generate solutions that delight all parties with conflicting opinions most of the time

<div>RESILIENCE</div> <div>Effectively handles stress; Is receptive, tolerant and resilient in process of achieving results</div>				
1 - Low	2	3 - Medium	4	5 – High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates counterproductive responses most of the time• Examples: Self-blaming / External attribution / Self-handicapping / Withdrawal from work		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is able to regulate negative emotions caused most of the time• Examples: Self-reflecting and figuring out rational reasons for past failure and possible ways for improvement to a certain extent		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates optimistic responses most of the time• Examples: Treats business targets, uncertainties of the job, different clients' expectations, and rejections as challenges and motivators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job performance (both quantity and quality) is negatively affected by counterproductive responses		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job performance (both quantity and quality) is not affected by negative emotions		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job performance (both quantity and quality) is positively affected by optimistic responses

<div>PROACTIVE</div> <div>Takes initiative to solve problems; Shows initiatives to seek ways to improve self, job knowledge and skills</div>				
1 - Low	2	3 - Medium	4	5 - High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does not take action to solve problems		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Takes initiative to solve problems		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Takes initiative to discovers potential problems, and generates solutions promptly
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fails to learn from others, reluctant to learn new skills and knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Takes initiative to approach other colleagues, including supervisors and coworkers, and learn from them		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Takes initiative to approach other colleagues including supervisors and coworkers and be able to learn their strengths within a short time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sets easy goalsMisses pre-set goals most of the time		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sets standard goals that match with company objectivesMeets pre-set goals most of the time		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Actively sets challenging goals that match with company objectivesMeets pre-set goals most of the time

<div>INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY</div> <div>Demonstrates empathetic understanding; Beware of clients', coworkers' and organization's needs without overriding them</div>				
1 - Low	2	3 - Medium	4	5 - High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fails to understand others' needs and problems• Unable to reflect feelings related to others' problems		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands others' needs and problems• Reflects feelings based on others' explicit messages		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates empathetic understanding of others' needs and problems• Reflects feelings and grasps implicit meanings of others' problems• Is able to view from others' frame of reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overrides clients', coworkers' and organization's needs with own self-interests		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beware of clients', coworkers' and organization's needs without overriding them		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beware of clients', coworkers' and organization's needs without overriding them• Resolves the conflicts of needs constructively• Gets a balance of all stakeholders' interests

COMMUNICATION SKILLS				
Expresses ideas in a clear and persuasive manner; Demonstrates active listening				
1 - Low	2	3 - Medium	4	5 - High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses idea in an unclear manner		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses ideas clearly		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses ideas clearly and persuasively
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does not listen carefully and with inappropriate feedback (e.g. eye contact and gestures)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Listens carefully and without inappropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback (e.g. eye contact and gestures)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Listens carefully and with appropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback (e.g. eye contact and gestures)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides slow and inappropriate response (e.g. ask inappropriate follow-up questions)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides appropriate response (e.g. ask appropriate follow-up questions)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides quick and appropriate response (e.g. ask appropriate follow-up questions)

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